

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 3, 4, 6-41 and 68-76 are pending herein. Claims 14-41 are allowed. Claims 10 and 74 have been amended as supported by Fig. 1 of the present application, for example. New claims 75 and 76 have been added hereby as supported by Fig. 1 of the present application, for example.

Examiner Budd is thanked for courtesies extended to Applicants' undersigned representative during the telephonic interview on February 3, 2005. During the interview, Examiner Budd tentatively agreed that the above-outlined amendments to claims 10 and 74 would overcome the rejections of record. Examiner Budd did reserve his final decision in this case pending the results of an updated search.

New independent claims 75 and 76 are similar to claims 10 and 74, respectively, except that new claims 75 and 76 are not limited to the "opposing surfaces" being parallel to at least one of the thin plate sections. Since the presently claimed "slot" is not disclosed or suggested by Arai, it is believed that claims 75 and 76 also define patentable subject matter over the applied references.

Applicants respectfully submit that this application is in condition for allowance. Should the Examiner deem that any further action by the applicants would be desirable in placing this application in even better condition for issue, he is requested to telephone applicants' undersigned representative.

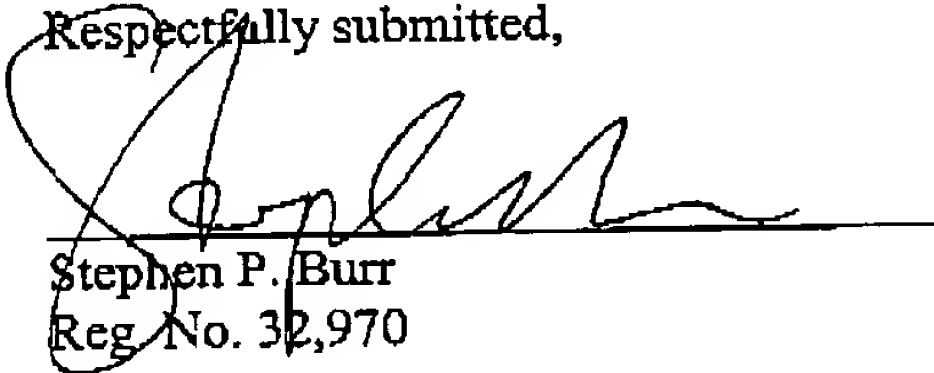
In closing, Examiner Budd is requested to confirm receipt and consideration of the Information Disclosure Statements filed November 1, 2004 and December 14, 2004.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees associated with this communication or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No. 50-1446.

Respectfully submitted,

February 8, 2005

Date


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